



SIS Study Town Hall Meeting Review

December 1, 2005
SIS Project Coordination Team

December 7, 2005
SIS Local Advisory Committee

SIS Study Purpose and Area

Evaluate higher education and workforce training needs and recommend solutions to the Legislature and governor in:

- Snohomish County
- Island County
- Skagit County

Opportunities for Public Input

A series of town hall meetings at three points in the study:

- Discussion of demographics and perceived need (November 2005)
- Program and Locale Analysis (May 2006)
- Preferred Alternative(s) (August 2006)



November 2005 Town Hall Meetings

**November 15 – Skagit Valley College
Mount Vernon**

**November 16 – Skagit Valley College
Oak Harbor**

**November 17 – Marysville-Pilchuck High School
Marysville**

Meeting Format

- **Introductions and Opening Comments**
- **Overview of Findings**
- **Questions from Audience on Overview**
- **Break-Out Groups (Question Discussion)**
- **Reports from Break-Out Groups**

6 Break-Out Group Questions

- 1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of educational opportunities in this county after high school?**
- 2. What are the postsecondary education program needs (or degree programs) and at what level are they needed (community college, 4-year, or graduate level)?**

6 Break-Out Group Questions

3. What method of higher education course delivery do you or others you know prefer or require? Rank the following:

- ☐ Traditional classroom
- ☐ Distance learning
- ☐ Web-based
- ☐ CD-ROM
- ☐ Hybrid of traditional and distance

6 Break-Out Group Questions

- 4. Other than the absence of programs, what other challenges make it difficult for you or others to pursue higher education?**
- 5. What is your purpose in pursuing postsecondary education?**
- 6. What are the values of postsecondary education to you?**

Values of Postsecondary Education

"No matter what happens to me in the course of my life, no one can take away my education. It's priceless."

"We have to offer the highly educated and highly skilled employees that are essential for businesses competing in a knowledge-based economy."

"Decreased crime rates and drug/alcohol abuse in higher education communities."

"Education creates better citizens."

Purpose in Pursuing Postsecondary Education

- **Employment**
- **Quality of life for self and family**
- **Self-fulfillment**
- **Learning how to think and apply knowledge**

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education

1. Cost
2. Transportation
3. Culture for higher education
4. High school preparation
5. Place bound by desire or circumstances
6. Wide geography

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education -- Cost

- Tuition
- Lack of work study opportunities
- Locally available financial aid (scholarships)
- State funding for services to students

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education -- Transportation

- Distance
- Travel Time
- Work Schedules
- Child Care

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education – Culture

“The culture for higher ed is really lacking. Where four-year institutions exist, that mindset is different.”

- **Poor populations with few resources, expectations or role models**
- **Non-English speaking populations**
- **Growing minority populations**

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education – Preparation

- Low high school graduation rates
- Adequacy of K-12 preparation
- Low retention rates among the 18-21 year olds in 4-year programs

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education – Place Bound

- Quality of life affects the desire of people to leave their comfort zone and travel out of the area for further education.
- Family obligations
- Economy. If you start working right away, it is difficult to leave the area for education. If the jobs aren't there when you finish, you don't return.
- Military families are place bound until they are transferred. Transfer of credits is important.

Challenges in Pursuing Higher Education – Geography

- What works for one part of the SIS Study area does not necessarily work for the other parts.
- There is wide geographic variation among the three counties and within each county.

Preferred Method of Course Delivery -- The Hybrid

#1 – Hybrid of “on the ground” traditional and wide variety of distance/web based

- “This kind of delivery system will require partnerships with local schools and resources to make cost effective.”
- “How do we get enough people together to make non-traditional learning methods cost-effective?”

Preferred Method of Course Delivery -- The Hybrid

- “More flexible structure and delivery methods are needed.” Night and weekend options
- “There are going to be times when distance learning is the only method for certain people. Frankly, I’d much rather hire a person who’s good with people and teach them the technical than hiring a great technical loner who’s uncomfortable around people. ...our business is relationships.”

Differences in Messages from the Sessions

- Turnout in Island County was low due to lack of news coverage.
 - Valuable feedback on the special nature of this geographic area from legislative perspective.

Differences in Messages from the Sessions

- **Skagit County session had limited public participation.**
 - Skagit Valley Community College faculty was well represented and active participants.
 - Very thoughtful session.

Differences in Messages from the Sessions

- **Snohomish County had the best turnout following newspaper articles on the development of a 4-year institution.**
 - Many attendees have concluded that a regional university is needed for Snohomish County. Some articulation on the type of course offerings.
 - Few students or prospective students attended.
 - Greater focus on meeting the needs of employers and economic vitality

Skagit County - Opportunities

- + Good access to community college system**
- Difficulties in commuting to WWU from Stanwood and south of Mount Vernon.**
- Huge geographic area without much baccalaureate opportunity**

Snohomish County - Opportunities

- + Great except in terms of high tech
- + Great CC opportunities except the area between Everett and Mt. Vernon
- + College without walls
- + NSIS facility with capabilities built in
- ± UWB/CCC is very strong, but not very big yet
- Lack of funding affects choices

Snohomish County – Opportunities (cont.)

- WWU and UW higher standards limit opportunities
- Graduate opportunities limited and far away
- Bulk of county population is close to Seattle
- More focus needed on high demand fields, especially math and science
- Math and science pipeline is challenged so technical programs have shortages
- Lack of transportation network

Skagit County Program Needs

- **4 year nursing and whole allied health field**
- **K-12 bilingual teachers**
- **4-year TEASL degree**
- **Special Education**
- **Programs that can transfer for military**
- **Graduate programs**
- **Business/Management—service industry growth**

Snohomish County Program Needs

- ✓ 4-year and graduate programs
- ✓ Allied health
- ✓ Special Education
- ✓ Graduate programs for working students
 - Math and science teachers (all levels)
 - Small and specialized programs operating periodically
 - Poly-tech and high tech
 - Certification programs, specifically to meet federal requirements
 - Advanced engineering
- ✓ Vocational training
 - Programs that complement SIS region economic “goals and agenda”

Island County Special Needs

- Wide geographic dispersion and isolation from the rest of the SIS study area
- Three separate regions
- Limited travel routes leads to traffic and congestion issues
- Military families and transfer needs
- Existing Oak Harbor facility may have untapped potential affected by funding priorities
- San Juan County in the service area